

FAITH'S ULTIMATUM

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A SERMON
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*"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."
Job 13:15.*

THIS is one of the supreme sayings of Scripture. It rises like an alpine summit, clear above all ordinary heights of speech. It pierces the clouds and glistens in the light of God. If I were required to quote a selection of the most sublime utterances of the human mind, I should mention this among the first—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." I think I might almost say to the man who thus spoke what our Lord said to Simon Peter when he had declared him to be the Son of the Highest—"Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you." Such tenacious holding, such immovable confidence, such unstaggering reliance are not products of mere nature, but rare flowers of rich divine grace. The text contains a precious jewel of grace, fitly set in the purest gold of choice speech. Happy is the man upon whose arm it can be worn as an ensign in the day of battle.

It is well worthy of observation that in these words Job answered both the accusations of Satan and the charges of his friends. Though I do not know that Job was aware that the devil had said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?" yet he answered that base suggestion in the ablest possible manner, for he did, in effect, say, "Though God should pull down my hedge and lay me bare as the wilderness itself, yet will I cling to Him in firmest faith." The arch-fiend had also dared to say that Job had held out under his first trials because they were not sufficiently personal. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch his bones and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." In the brave words before us, Job most effectually silences that slander by, in effect, saying, "Though my trial is no longer the slaying of my children, but of myself, yet will I trust in Him." He thus, in one sentence, replies to the two slanders of Satan and thus, unconsciously, does truth overthrow her enemies, defeating the secret malice of falsehood by the simplicity of sincerity. Job's friends also had insinuated that he was a hypocrite. They inquired of him, "Who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?" They thought themselves quite safe in inferring that Job must have been a deceiver, or he would not have been so specially punished. To this accusation Job's grand declaration of his unstaggering faith was the best answer possible, for none but a sincere soul could thus speak. Will a hypocrite trust in God when He slays him? Will a deceiver cling to God when He is smiting him? Assuredly not. Thus were the three miserable comforters answered if they had been wise enough to see it.

Our text exhibits a child of God under the most severe pressure and shows us the difference between him and a man of the world. A man of the world under the same conditions as Job would have been driven to despair and in that desperation, would have become morosely sullen, or defiantly rebellious! Here you see what, in a child of God, takes the place of desperation. When others despair, he trusts in God. When he has nowhere else to look, he turns to his heavenly Father. And when, for a time, even in looking to God, he does not meet with conscious comfort, he waits in the patience of hope, calmly expecting aid and resolving that, even if it does not come, he will cling to God with all the energy of his soul. Here, all the man's courage comes to the front, not, as in the case of the ungodly, obstinately to rebel, but bravely to confide. The child of God is courageous, for he knows how to trust. His heart says, "My Lord, it is bad with me now, and it is growing worse, but should the worst come to the worst, still will I cling to You and never let You go." In what better way can the believer reveal his loyalty to his Lord? He evidently follows his Master, not in fair weather only, but in the worst and roughest days. He loves his Lord, not only when He smiles upon him, but when He frowns. His love is not purchased by the liberality of his Lord's golden hands, for it is not destroyed by the smiting of His heavy rod. Though

my Lord puts on His sternest looks, though from fierce looks He should go to cutting words, and though from terrible words, He should proceed to cruel blows which seem to beat the very life out of my soul, yes, though He take down the sword and threaten to execute me, yet is my heart steadfastly set upon one resolve, namely, to bear witness that He is infinitely good and just. I have not a word to say against Him, nor a thought to think against Him. Much less would I wander from Him, and though He slay me, I would trust in Him.

What is my text but an Old Testament version of the New Testament, “Quis separabit?”—Who shall separate? Job does but anticipate Paul’s question, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Was not the same Spirit in both Job and Paul? Is He also in us? If so, we are men indeed, and our speech is with power and this declaration to us is no idle boast, no foolish bravado, though it would be ridiculous indeed, if there were not a gracious heart behind it to make it good. It is the conquering shout of an all-surrendering faith which gives up all but God. I wish that we may all have its spirit this morning, that whether we suffer Job’s trial or not, we may at any rate have Job’s close adherence to the Lord, his faithful confidence in the Most High.

There are three things in the text—a *terrible supposition*—“Though He slay me;” a *noble resolution*, “yet will I trust in Him;” and thirdly, a *secret appropriateness*. This last will require a little looking into, but I hope to make it clear that there is a great appropriateness in our trusting while God is slaying us—the two things go well together, though it may not so appear at first.

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE SUPPOSITION—“Though He slay me.” The Lord is here set forth as a slayer of His trusting servant. An idea full of terror. *It is a supposition which, in some senses, cannot be tolerated for a minute*—“Though He slay me.” Here I am, His dear child, one whom He has loved from before the foundation of the world. One for whom He laid down His life upon the Cross. One of whom He has said, “I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands.” How can He slay me? If He does so, it can only be in a minor sense. As to my best and truest life, it must be safe, for He is its author and guardian, and cannot be its destroyer. Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she could not have compassion on the son of her womb? Could she suffer a child of hers to die while she had power to keep it alive? Would she lay violent hands upon the child of her love and destroy it? God forbid. Neither will God destroy, or suffer to be destroyed, any of His own dear children. Jesus has solemnly said—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” The fairest children of the earth will die, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and all flesh is as decaying grass. But the feeblest child of God will live forever, for the life of God in every degree is immortality. Time will put out the sun. The lamp of the moon will grow dim in ages yet to come, but neither time nor age shall quench a solitary spark of heaven-born grace and light. Though faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, it is essentially a living thing, and it is not conceivable that God Himself should slay that which is quickened with His life. Though it is imperceptible sometimes even to the possessor of it, and though it should raise many painful questions as to whether it is there at all, yet if it is there, God will preserve it even to the end. Come, child of God, you must not suppose that the Lord will slay you forever. You must not allow suppositions which would dishonor your God. You may suppose what you like if it is innocent, but you must not suppose that which would blaspheme the divine love, or cast a slur upon God’s fidelity to His promise. He may cast you aside for awhile, but He cannot cast you away forever. He may take away your goods, but not your highest good. He may allow a cloud to rest upon your reputation, a blight to fall upon your usefulness, and a storm to sweep away your happiness, but His mercy is not clean gone forever—He has not in anger turned away His heart from you. He has chastened you sorely, but He has not given you over unto death.

No, you must not interpret the supposition of the text as though it said, “Though He leave me to perish, though He cast me into hell,” for that can never be. But I make bold to say that even if the devil were to whisper in your ear that the Lord would finally destroy you, it would be a glorious thing if you could bravely reply, “And if He did I would still trust Him.” One old saint once used very daring and perhaps, unjustifiable language when he said in ecstasy of love, “If God casts me into hell, I will hold so

fast by Him that He shall go there, too. I will not let Him go and hell itself will be no hell to me while He is there." Beloved, say in your soul—"Though the Lord should condemn me, I will not rebel, but confess that He is just. Though He should refuse to hear my prayers, yet He is an infinitely good and blessed God, and I will still praise Him." But beloved, it cannot be that God should slay or condemn a believer, and you need not tolerate the supposition. Blessed be His name, He has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow. Neither has one soul that trusted in Him ever been forsaken.

The terrible supposition before us is inclusive of all possible ills. "Though He slay me." He means that if every form of evil up to actual death should come upon him, yet would he trust in God. Though he should lose all that he had in flock or field, in purse or portion, yet would he trust. In Job's case, away went the oxen and the asses, away went the sheep, away went the camels and away went all the servants. And each time, as the messenger came breathlessly running in, he said, "I, only, am left alone to tell you." At last the worst news of all came, for all his children were taken away at a stroke. All was gone, for his wife was as good as lost, too, since she went over to the enemy, and said, "Curse God and die." Well, says Job, "Though my troubles have left me bare of all but life, though nothing remains to me but this dunghill and the broken potsherd with which I scrape my sores, yet will I trust in the Lord." Oh, it was bravely said!

In this resolve, as we have seen, he includes not only all losses of property, but all bereavements of friends. And I should like you Christian people to look this in the face. Perhaps the Lord may suddenly take away from you the dearest object of your heart's affection—your husband or your wife—can you trust Him then? The almost idolized children may be removed, one by one, and leave sad vacancies within your heart. O fond wife, the beloved of your soul may pass away in the prime of his manhood. The brother may be cut down as the green herb and the sister fade as a flower. Parents, children, brethren—any and all of these may be put far from you—and you may find yourselves as lone trees, whereas now you are surrounded by a kindred forest. You may be the last of the roses, left alone, scarcely blooming, but bowing your head amid the heavy showers of sorrow which drench you to the soul. Now, believer, if you are in such a deplorable case as that, can you still say, "If the Lord should go even further than this, should His next arrows penetrate my own lacerated heart, even then, as I bleed to death, I will kiss His hand"?

Job included in his supposition all kinds of pain. We can hardly imagine the bodily agony of Job when he was covered with boils from the soles of his feet unto his head. None could approach him, the disease was so foul, neither could he endure to be touched. He says, "Though I have all these boils and even should they grow worse, so that the pains I now endure should become unendurable, and should I suffer the very anguish of death itself, yet still would I put my trust in my God. Neither poverty, loneliness, nor fierce torment shall make me forsake the Lord, nor shall all put together cause me to doubt Him." What a victory of faith is this!

Job, at that time, also suffered from dishonor, for those who once looked up to him with respect, now despised him in their hearts. He says that those whose fathers he would have disdained to have set with the dogs of his flock, opened their mouths against him, and whereas, when he stood in the street, princes were silent in his presence to listen to his wisdom, now among the most base of mankind, he had become a song and a byword. As for his mistaken friends, he had grown so weary of them that he said, "O that you would altogether hold your peace and it would be your wisdom." Poor Job was sorely galled with the scorn poured on him at a time when he deserved both sympathy and honor, but yet his faith cries, "If I am still more despised and forgotten as a dead man out of mind, yet will I trust in You, my God."

Connected with all this, the afflicted patriarch must have felt much depression of spirit. Did he not say, "Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. For God makes my heart soft and the Almighty troubles me"? Those of us who are subject to depression of spirit find much that is congenial in the Book of Job. His music is in tune with our own. How bitterly does he wail at times! What wondrous insight has he into the mystery of sorrow! Though his grief has never been thoroughly weighed, nor his calamities laid in the balances together, yet have his woes been considered by thousands of mourners. They have ministered a wealth of consolation to them. Job does not exclude his own despondencies from his resolves. No, he mainly intends them, for these are, in a special sense, a man's own personal slaying and he says, "Though He slay *me*"—though my heart should break with an-

guish, pierced through with despondency, yet will I put my trust in God. I began by calling the supposition of our text a terrible one, and now I claim that I have shown it to be so, since it includes the coming upon us of all sorts of ills.

Listen, yet again. *This supposition goes to the extreme of possibility*, if not beyond it, for it will be hard to find a case in which God has really slain any of His servants. The martyrs were slain for Him, but not by Him. To none of His children, save one, has the Lord been as Abraham was to Isaac when he unsheathed the knife to slay him. If it had been so, could we have been as the lamb beneath the sacrificial knife? The stones which slew Stephen and the sword which slew James were in the hands of cruel men and not in the hands of God. But God Himself is here supposed to slay us. Now, though He has not actually done so, we may inquire whether we could resign ourselves to Him, even if He should take life and all with His own hands. Could we lie on the altar and not struggle? Do we hate, even, our own life for love of Him? What do we say? Is our love stronger than death? God grant it may be found so.

But *this supposition goes further than matters ever will go*. Why then does the patriarch suppose such a case? I answer because only by such suppositions can he express his faith to the fullest. Remember that psalm, "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea"? We are not expecting the earth to move nor the mountains to plunge into the ocean—but in order to express our confidence, we declare that even such a quaking would not affect the foundation of our faith. God Himself meets His people in the same manner, by saying, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed." Child of God, you may suppose what never will occur, if you like, and project your soul by that supposition into depths of woe and grief into which you will never actually come, and yet, through divine grace you will resolve, "If it came even to that, I would still trust in Him."

Though the text supposes what will not actually occur, yet *it is a just description of what often does occur as far as our conceptions go*. Have you ever known what it is to be, in your own conceptions, slain by God? My heart has known it often. It is as death itself to feel all your religion melt away like the hoar frost of the morning when the sun has risen. All your joys in which you delighted fly away like birds when a man claps his hands. Have you ever had to begin all over again, at the very alphabet of repentance and childlike faith—and find even that no easy work? Did you never know what it was to get your cup right full of what you thought was holy joy and sweet experience and then for the Lord to turn it, bottom upward, and let you see that it was a mixture of self-conceit and sentimentalism, with thick dregs at the bottom of pride and falsehood? Can you say with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection"? Have you ever been brought down from imaginary riches to bitter but honest poverty? Have you ever thought you were becoming so wonderfully sanctified that you could scarcely lay a split sheet of tissue paper between you and perfection—and then all of a sudden the Lord has laid you naked and made you loathe the sight of your inborn corruptions? You have been as a cup which bubbled at the top and frothed over, and the Lord has blown off the froth and made you see the black draught of your inward vileness. God has many ways of thus slaying, in His children, all that ought to die. Thus He kills the spiritual hypocrisy which is so common in us all. Our life seems, at times, to run all into puffballs and bloated fungi of self-glorying. We think that we are something when we are nothing. And then the Lord prunes us back to our real condition. Do you know what it is to be thus slain? Ah, my brethren, at times our life is a long experience of the power of death. Do you know what it is to say, "Is this prayer? Why, while I prayed, my thoughts were perplexed, distracted and wandering. Is this faith? Why, even on the most vital points my soul dares scarcely speak with confidence! Is this love?—love to Christ, which even while I exercise it accuses me on account of its lukewarmness and lack of self-denying ardor. Can this be spiritual life? Life at which I blush and over which I mourn! Life which scarcely reaches so far as feeling and when it does, soon subsides into insensibility!" Beloved brethren, I speak from experience. All this is a kind of slaying by which the Lord hides pride from men and keeps them from the snares of vain confidence. Has He not written, "I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal"? In these times of wounding and killing, which are very common to the experience of some of the children of God, the only thing we can do is still to trust—"Though He slay me, I will trust in Him." Trust Him though He sifts out nine-tenths of your hopes, burns up all your experiences, grinds your evidences to powder, crushes

all your realized sanctities and sweeps away all your rests and refuges. Then, indeed, is the best time of all to exercise true faith.

Once more, *the grim supposition of the text, if ever it were realized by anybody, was realized by our Lord Jesus*. Our great covenant Head knows to the full what His members suffer. God did slay Him and glory be to His blessed name, He trusted God while He was being slain. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief." Yet from the lips of our dear Lord we hear no expressions of unbelief. Read the 22nd psalm, where He says, "Our fathers trusted in You, they trusted in You and You did deliver them, but I am a worm, and no man." Hear how He pleads with God and specially listen to His dying words, where, though He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" yet a few minutes later He cries, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." What! Into the hands of a God who had forsaken Him and smitten Him? Did He commit Himself into those hands? Yes, into those very hands. And herein we must follow in His steps. Though the Lord cuts, hews, hacks, tears, and grinds us to powder, yet out of the dust, the tears and the blood of the conflict, we must look up to Him and say, "I still trust You." Here is the patience of the saints! Here is the glory of faith! Blessed is the man who thus becomes more than a conqueror. I say it calmly, I would sooner be able to do as Job did, than to be one of yonder seraphim who have never suffered and consequently, have never clung to a slaying God. I count it the grandest possibility of a created being that it is able to completely yield itself up into the Creator's hands and unwaveringly believing in the Creator's love, in hope believing against hope. O, royal word of a right royal soul, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

II. Secondly, we have before us A NOBLE RESOLUTION—"Yet will I trust in Him." Job meant that he was confident that the Lord was just. And though he did not feel that the suffering he was then enduring was sent upon him for his sins, yet he never doubted the righteousness of God in so afflicting him. His friends said, "You see, Job, you suffer more than anybody else. Therefore you must have been a hypocrite, for God will not lay upon any man more than is just." "No," said Job, "I have been upright before the Lord. And yet, on the other hand, I do not accuse the Lord of injustice, I am sure He does what is right. And I trust Him as much as ever." There were two things to which Job stuck very firmly—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him, but I will maintain my own ways before Him"—that is, I will not admit that I have been a hypocrite, for I have been sincerely obedient to Him. Nor will I be driven to the other conclusion, that God is unjust in afflicting me. Job did not understand the Lord's reasons, but he continued to confide in His goodness. He set no terms or limits to the Lord's actions, but left all to His absolute will and was sure that whatever He might do, it must be right. Should death prevent all apparent possibility of making up to him all his losses and woes, his faith leaped over the sepulcher and saw justice and mercy alive in the realms beyond, making all things right in the end. O, it was grand, thus, to champion almighty goodness in the teeth of death itself.

Now, dear brethren, you and I, if we are resting upon God, may say, "Whatever happens, though I may not be able to understand God's dispensations to me any more than Job understood God's dispensations towards him, yet I am quite sure of this—that He will help me in my trouble and I will, therefore, cast myself upon Him—believing that as my days my strength shall be. Or if He does not aid me in my trouble with manifest help, I will still trust that He will bring me out of it, that if He seems to forsake me for a while, yet it shall be said of me as of Gad, "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last."

If I should neither receive present help nor immediate deliverance, yet I am persuaded that my good is designed by my long trial and that God is making the worst things work out my everlasting benefit and His own glory—therefore I will submit to His will and expect, in the end, to see the lovingkindness of the Lord. Yes, and if I should have neither present help nor deliverance, nor see any immediate good come of my affliction, yet will I repose myself upon God, for in some mysterious way or other I shall yet know that His providence was right and good, for He cannot err. His dealings must be wise, He cannot be unkind. His actions must be tender. Though the sharp edge of death itself invades me, I will hold to this belief, that You, O Lord, do all things right. If down to the sepulcher my steps must go and through the gloomy valley's darkest shade my pilgrimage must wind, yet will I fear no evil, for Your rod and staff shall be my confidence. And I will be sure that He who bids me die will bid me live again—up from the grave my body shall yet rise—and in my flesh I see shall God. As for my spirit, though it pass through the death shade, it shall come forth into a brighter light and in the eternity of glory it shall re-

ceive abundant recompense for the sorrows of the present time. This is the faith for us to hold at all times—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Why, do you think, Job was able to speak so positively about his trusting God? Was it not because he knew God? "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." If you would believe God, you must know Him. Those who are strangers to Him cannot trust Him. O, beloved, only think what God is. Sometimes, when I am contemplating His being and character, I feel as if I could leap for joy. And when I touch upon the theme in the pulpit, I feel as if I could talk on forever in His praise and use the grandest, sweetest, richest words in human language to tell what a blessed God my God is. What! The Lord do wrong to any of us? Impossible! The Lord be unkind to us? The supposition cannot be endured for a single moment. After once knowing Him, we feel that all the goodness and kindness of fathers, mothers, brethren, children, husbands, wives—all put together—is only like one single drop of sweetness compared with that ocean full of honey which is to be found in His infinite love. Besides, we have not only His attributes to trust, but His past actions to us. Did my Lord forgive me all my sin? And after that will He ever be unkind to me? Did He lay down His life for me upon the accursed tree and can I dream that He will desert me? Have I looked into the wounds of my dying Savior and shall I ever murmur if He should multiply pains and sufferings and losses and crosses to me? God forbid. Such love as His forbids all fear. Did you ever lean on the Bridegroom's arm? Have you ever sung like the bride in the canticle, "His left hand is under my head, and His right arm does embrace me"? Did He ever stay you with dragons and comfort you with apples while your soul was sick with too much delight? And after all that, will you indulge harsh thoughts of Him? O, no, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we cannot think harshly of Him who has dealt so kindly with us. His ways must be right. Such wondrous acts of love as His have proved to us beyond all question that He is love, essential love and cannot, therefore, do us an ill turn.

Besides this, we know the relationship in which He stands to us. It has been said that you cannot trust an enemy and it has been equally well added you cannot trust a reconciled enemy—suspicion lingers long. But our God is no reconciled enemy, though He is sometimes represented as if He were so. He has loved us with an everlasting love. His is no friendship of yesterday, no passion which began to burn a month or two ago. Long before the hills lifted up their heads, He loved us. The bands of His Fatherhood are upon us and we can well commit ourselves into His hands.

Are any of us in great trouble, this morning? Then let us trust in the Lord, now, for what else can we do? Suppose we give up trusting in Him—to whom or where should we go? If this anchor drags, what other holdfast can there be? Let us continue to trust our Lord, for He deserves it. He has never done anything that could justify our doubting Him. Has He ever been false to us? Ah, Judas, you sold your Master, but your Master never sold you. Ah, unbelieving heart, you have wandered from Jesus, but He never wandered from you. If you do not doubt Him till you have cause for doubting Him, it will not be soon. Let us trust our God, for this is the sweetest comfort a man can have. This side of heaven, nothing can yield the afflicted man such support under trial as when he can fall back upon the strong love of God and believe that the wisdom of God is overruling all. Nothing tends to sanctify our trials and produce good results from them, as faith in God. This is the Samson which finds honey in the lion. For a thousand reasons I would say, "Trust in the Lord at all times: you people, pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us." Say, each one of you, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!"

III. And, now, the last point is this—A SECRET APPROPRIATENESS about it all.

There is a something about our Lord's slaying us which should help us to trust Him. I would sooner the Lord should slay me with troubles and trials than let me alone in my sin. What says the Scriptures? "If you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards and not sons, for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" I do not so much pity the children of God who have a cross to carry—I reserve my fears for those worldlings who are not in trouble as other men, neither plagued like other men. It would be very foolish for the afflicted one to say, "I am no child of God because He smites me"—there would be more reason in the sinner's saying, "I am no child of God, for I have my portion in this life." Surely there is something in you which God loves, or else He would not be killing that which He hates. If He hates the sin in you, it is a good sign, for where do we hate sin most? Why, in those we love most. If you see a fault in a stranger, you wink your eye and say but little. But in your own dear child you are deeply grieved to observe it. Where there is true love there is a measure of jealousy and the

more burning the love, the more fierce the jealousy, especially on the part of Jesus Christ. Where He sees sin in those who are very dear to Him, His fury burns not against them, but against their sin—and He will not stop until He has slain it. His rebukes are severe, not because of lack of love, but because He loves so much. An ungodly man met me some years ago, when I was suffering, and said to me in a jeering way, “Ah, whom the Lord loves, He chastens, I see.” I said, “Yes, it is His custom.” “Ah,” he said, “so long as I am without the chastisement I am very content to be without the love.” Oh, it brought the red into my cheeks and the tears into my eyes, and I cried, “I would not change places with you for 10,000 worlds. If my God were to afflict me from head to foot I would bear it joyfully sooner than live a moment without His love.” When the Lord flogs us, we love Him, and we would not leave Him though the devil should bribe us with all the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them. Our Father puts us, sometimes, into the black hole, and we are there crying bitterly under a sense of His wrath, but we love Him still, and if anybody were to find fault with Him, we would be up at once and say, “He is a good God and blessed be His name.”

Note, again, that *the slaying of the creature is the very condition in which faith was born* and in which she delights to display her power. We are saved by passing from death unto life. As Noah was like a dead man, out of mind, shut up in the ark, and by this burial, passed into the new world. And as in the ordinance of baptism, we are in like figure buried with Christ that we may rise with Him. So faith took her birth in the death of the creature at the time when the new life was breathed into us. When God is slaying all that is capable of death and our new immortal life alone survives, faith feels as if her birthday had come over again and brought with it her native air.

Notice again, *it is at times when God is slaying us that our faith is being tested* whether it is true or not. When all the winds are fair, how can you tell whether your boat would bear a storm? How much faith some of us have at times! Have you ever felt as if you could fight seven devils with one hand? There was not a devil within seven miles when you were so bold—but when the smallest fiend has drawn near—your courage has oozed out. We are like an old man whom I once knew, who said to me, “Here am I, 80 years old, and through the winter I often think I wish I had a bit of mowing or reaping to do, for I feel quite young again. But as soon as harvest comes on, and I get down my old sickle, I have not done much before I feel the old man is a very old man and had better leave that work alone.” Slaying times let us know whether our strength is real strength and whether our confidence is true confidence. And this is good, for it would be a great pity for us to be stocked with heaps of vain faith, fictitious grace, and ready-made holiness. Some of my friends talk as if they had boldness enough for a dozen people, but I am afraid if they were tried, as some of us are, they would find they had not half enough for one. This is the benefit of trial—it lets us see what is gold and what is tinsel—what is fact and what is fiction. Alas, how much religious fiction is abroad at this time!

Note further, that *slaying times are the most favorable for trusting God*. I have been putting a little riddle to myself. Here it is. Is it easier to trust God when you have nothing, or when you have all things? Is it easier to say, “Though He slay me, I will trust in Him,” or to say, “Though He make me alive, I will trust in Him”? Will you think it over? Shall I help you? Here is a man without a farthing in the world. His cupboard is bare, his flocks are cut off from the field, and his herds from the stall. Is it hard for that man to trust in God? If you say so, I will not dispute with you. But here is another man who has a bank full of gold. His meadows are covered with flocks and herds, his barns are ready to burst with corn, and his trade prospers on all hands. Now, sirs, is it easy for that man to trust God? Do you say, “Yes”? I say, “No.” I say that he has a very hard task, indeed, to live by faith, and the probabilities are that when he says, “I trust God,” he is trusting his barn or his bank. All things considered, it occurs to me that it is easier to trust God in adversity than in prosperity, because whatever trust there is in adversity is real trust. But a good deal of the faith we have in prosperity is a kind of trust which you will have to take upon trust—and whether it is faith or not is a matter of serious question. Sirs, where is the room for faith when you can see already all that you need? A full barn has no room for faith if she is any bigger than a mouse. But in an empty barn, faith has scope and liberty. When the brook Cherith is dried up, when the poor widow has nothing left but a handful of meal and a little oil, then there is room for the prophet to exercise faith. O, brethren, it is well to go into action with clear decks. In the name of God, with double-barreled guns full of strong faith, you can let the world and the flesh and the devil know what faith is. But while your deck is all hampered with comforts and visible resources, faith can scarcely stir a hand or

move a gun. "Though He slay me"—well, that means everything is gone—only breath enough left for me just to exist. And now, my Lord, You are all in all to me. Now can I say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? There is none upon the earth that I desire but You."

Once more, *these slaying times* are very desirable occasions, because they *allow the child of God to show that he is not a mercenary professor*, held to Christ by a cupboard love. If God were always to prosper us, the world would say, "These Christians follow their God as stray dogs follow those who give them bones, but they have no sincere love." When the Lord falls a whipping us, and we love Him all the more, then they cannot say but what we are faithful. Nor can they deny the work of grace in our souls. Oh, you that are Christians as long as it is pleasant to be Christians. You who make your love to Christ depend upon your feeling happy—what despicable beings you are. Our Lord wants not such base disciples, but such as can say, "If I lose all I have, still I love You, O my Savior. Your sweet love is so precious that if death were threatened me I would still choose You to be my all in all." Love desires opportunities for proving her unselfish sacrifice and such is the opportunity of the text.

There are seeking souls here, this morning, and I daresay they have said, "Mr. Spurgeon has been describing great faith—we shall never get to that." I have been thinking, dear souls, what kind of a man is most like a little child. Is it not a very old man? What kind of faith is most like new-born faith? Why, the ripest and most advanced faith. My text is very old faith—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." But the very first faith I had in Christ—I remember it well—was just like it. I thought He would destroy me. I could not see how He could do otherwise and be a just God. I thought He must strike me down if I went to Him. He seemed to stand with a drawn sword in His hand. But I felt, "Well, if He does slay me, I had better die by His hand than remain His enemy." And I went to Him. I was like the boy who ran away from his home and dared not return because he feared his father would flog him. He was out all night, shivering, cold and wet. He had nothing to eat all day. By the time he got to the next evening, such was his dread of being alone all through another night, that he said to himself, "I would sooner feel my father's rod than lie here." And so he went home and was received with tenderness. So with me. I thought if I went to the Lord, I should have to smart for it, but I concluded I would rather smart than be as I was. And so I went to Him and found I was safe. O poor souls, come to Jesus Christ in that fashion. Say—

*"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try,
For, if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I the king have tried;
That were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."*

Say, "If I go to hell, I will trust Christ. If I am cast away forever, I will trust Christ—and that cannot be, for, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." God grant you true faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—73 (PART 2), 689, 46 (VERSE 3).**

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